

Town of Wethersfield Conservation Commission
Minutes of the September 10, 2014 Meeting
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Co-Chairman Robert Pulford called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM in the Town Hall Conference Room, which was attended by Commissioners Rick Doran, Bill Knapp, Ralph Moyer, Linda Neilson and Rebecca Zalznock. Chairman Rick Baldoni arrived a few minutes after the meeting began. Also in attendance was Kathy Bagley, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department; Town Manager Jeff Bridges; and Town resident Jim Woodworth.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes for July 9, 2014 were approved unanimously under a Motion by R. Doran, Seconded by B. Knapp.

II. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE

In working towards gaining Town eligibility and participation in the State farmland preservation program, R. Doran, R. Baldoni, and K. Bagley previously met with J. Bridges to discuss Town participation in this program. In response, Mr. Bridges conducted an "agricultural preservation review" and provided a map of the town illustrating the locations of open space (from the Commission's inventory database); Town owned land; FEMA 100 year flood zone areas; inland wetland locations; and agricultural parcels participating in the PA 490 tax program.

Based on his review and evaluation of the information, Mr. Bridges concluded the following:

1. Using the parcels currently listed in the Conservation Commission Open Space Inventory, only 3 upland parcels would be considered eligible for the farmland preservation program;
2. Should the Town purchase any of these 3 parcels under the farmland preservation program, usage would be restricted for agricultural purposes only.
3. The State law requires that any creation of an Agricultural Commission must be separate from the Conservation Commission, therefore re-naming the Commission to include Agricultural Preservation responsibilities is not an option.
4. The Commission should evaluate the worthiness of entering into a program for which only 3 parcels would be considered eligible; but rather explore options to achieve the same goals of preserving open space without creating another entity of government.
5. With the current information before him, Mr. Bridges would not recommend Town Council's approval for the creation of an Agricultural Commission.

The discussion that followed by the Commissioners and by resident J. Woodworth included options to revise Mr. Bridges' map to include agricultural parcels the Commission identifies as vulnerable for development; potential discussions with the Town Council by the Commission; the merits of available funding; and the preservation of agriculture land of less than 30 acres.

R. Moyer suggested the Commission be prepared to discuss options at the next scheduled meeting; with K. Bagley to email a copy of Mr. Bridges' map to each Commissioner.

Chairman Baldoni ended the meeting at 8:10 PM under a motion by R. Moyer, Seconded by R. Doran.

Respectfully submitted by

Rebecca M. Zalznock, Secretary